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WHAT IS BACK OF 4-H ACCOMPLISHMENTS?

A radio talk by Karl Knaus, Extension Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture, delivered in the National 4-H Club Radio Program, June 4, 1938, and broadcast by a network of associate NBC radio stations.

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Column after column has been written, and speech after speech has been made lauding the achievements of 4-H club champions. All the praise and acclaim given has been deserved. Without in any way wishing to detract from the accomplishments of these champions, I want to call attention to the boys and girls behind the champions - the boys and girls who do creditable work, have excellent records measured by these or other standards, but who do not quite reach the peak of accomplishment that wins the award of the judges. For every National championship awarded, there are approximately 47,000 4-H club members enrolled. For each State championship awarded, there are from 1,000 to 2,000 other 4-H members. What is it besides the public recognition and acclaim that comes to the champion which causes these thousands of boys and girls to complete club projects year after year?

As boys and girls approach the age when they are no longer eligible for membership in 4-H clubs, they seldom mention prizes won when speaking of benefits received from 4-H club activities. They are proud of their achievements - yes - but after the excitement of the contest is past, it is not so much the winning but rather the knowledge and experience gained from the participation that they treasure. A Howard County, Mo., girl once said, "Some might think that meeting the requirements of the projects would be work, but to me it was work which was very much enjoyed. It gave me a feeling of satisfaction and pride to see shelves of canned fruit and vegetables in the cellar, and to know that I had canned them."

The boy, or girl, whose corn, calf, dress, or bread may be far down the line may gain the most from his club work.

The manner in which we must necessarily select our champions cannot always recognize those qualities in the boys and girls which we most desire to promote. The calf-club member whose father is a prominent breeder or financially able to purchase a top calf has a great advantage over other boys who may not be so fortunately situated, or the health champion may personally do very little to accomplish that honor. The contest rules are revised from year to year to correct such situations, but inequalities of opportunity are difficult to eliminate. Take, for example, that Missouri boy from Linn County, whose calf stood thirteenth in line at a St. Joe show. As he looked down across the backs of those calves which were better than his, there came to him an appreciation of what he must do to win. Next year he was fortunate enough to

obtain a better calf -- a calf that responded to the better care he gave it, and he was rewarded in proportion.

Standing at the ringside at the Indiana State Fair a few years ago, Jess Andrew, a prominent Tippecanoe County livestock breeder, noted the poor sportsmanship of one of the 4-H club contestants. That incident gave Mr. Andrew an idea. For the past several years he has awarded a purebred heifer and a purebred ewe lamb to the boy or girl who ranks highest on the general 4-H club score card and also in sportsmanship as shown in the barns and in the show ring, without regard to the excellence of calf or lamb shown. In other words, Mr. Andrew has provided a reward for the boy or girl who can take defeat gracefully.

An almost endless number of examples could be given of boys and girls who have never achieved championship distinction and yet have themselves grown and become valuable members of the community in which they live. There is a senior this year at South Dakota State College who has never won more than a second place or reserve championship, but is always the first to congratulate the winner.

There is the Sedgwick County, Kans., girl who was many times a member of judging and demonstration teams, yet never placed first in competition. She is now successfully leading clubs in two communities of her home county.

And the Barren County, Ky., girl, a club member for 8 years, who entered many district and State contests but never won a first place, but because of her leadership was considered several times for a trip to the National Club Camp at Washington, D. C.

These boys and girls are all pace-setters. Their efforts are responsible for the high standard of accomplishment of those who do win. They force the champions to maximum accomplishments and by so doing, become the foundation of 4-H accomplishments. After all, it may not be the winning but the way the game is played that is the most important.